

Exhibit 8

SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENCY

Tunisia, Delicately Straddling the Politics of North Africa and the Mideast

January 6, 2021 by [Stéphanie Fillion](#)



Tunisia's ambassador to the UN, Tarek Ladeb. His country presides over the Security Council this month as it also celebrates the 10th anniversary of its "revolution of freedom and dignity," the birth of the Arab Spring. JOHN PENNEY

It's become the origin story of Tunisia's revolution and the broader Arab Spring: In December 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor, set himself on fire after years of being harassed by police officers and experiencing a series of humiliating encounters with local officials. His self-immolation became the focus of long-simmering anger toward the government, and Tunisians took to the streets, igniting protests that became so widespread that on Jan. 14, 2011, after 23 years of autocratic rule, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled the country.

Since then, Tunisia has become the only democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring, and it is currently serving on the Security Council for the first time since the revolution — this month as its rotating president.

Case 1:18-cv-12355-MKV-DCF Document 144-8 Filed 10/27/21 Page 3 of 15

“January is very special and significant for Tunisia since it coincides with the 10th anniversary of the revolution of freedom and dignity in Tunisia that laid the foundations of our democratic experience and added impetus to its role on the regional and international scene,” Tarek Ladeb, Tunisia’s permanent representative to the United Nations, told PassBlue in an interview recently.

While Tunisia’s democratic transition has been applauded by the international community, the country faces many challenges. In terms of its role on the Council, for example, it must seek to promote democratic values while not offending its allies in the League of Arab States or the African Union.

Back home, “the mood in Tunisia in general is not necessarily celebratory because of the economic issues and because of the political bickering that is poisoning political life in the country,” Youssef Cherif, director of Columbia University’s Global Center in Tunis, told PassBlue.

On Jan. 6, Tunisia organized an [open debate](#) on the challenges of sustaining peace and security in fragile contexts, which Tunisian President Kais Saied and Liberia’s former president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, attended virtually.

One of the country’s priorities is fighting terrorism. Tunisia is currently chair of the Security Council’s counterterrorism committee and aims to use this opportunity to hold an open debate, on Jan. 12, on the 20th anniversary of [Resolution 1373](#), a commitment to international cooperation in combating terrorism in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. (Tunisia was serving on the Council when the resolution was adopted.)

Palestine is also high on Tunisia’s list of priorities. There will be an [open debate](#) on Palestine’s status on Jan. 26, chaired by Tunisia’s minister of foreign affairs, Othman Jerandi. Ambassador Ladeb noted that this is the first such debate for the UN’s newly appointed special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, [Tor Wennesland](#), who has been Norway’s special representative for the Middle East peace process. Ladeb said he hoped Tunisia’s presidency would create fresh momentum for the peace process.

Libya is another matter that will be hard to ignore. Late last month, the newly appointed Libya envoy, the Bulgarian diplomat Nickolay Mladenov, suddenly announced he would not be able to accept the position for family reasons. The negotiations leading up to the appointment were long and tedious, especially for the [African members](#) of the Council. There will be a meeting on the UN’s mission in Libya on Jan. 28, as negotiations continue on the [transition](#) of Libya to a legitimate, representative government.

“There’s momentum in Libya and people are suffering, and we want that security and peace be restored as soon as possible,” Ambassador Ladeb said. “We want our brothers, the Libyans, to achieve sustainable peace and sustainable political settlement for the crisis.”

As for the choice of a new special envoy, he added, that's "the prerogative of the secretary-general in coordination and consultation with the member states." (An acting special envoy, Stephanie Williams of the United States, remains for now; and a new post, mission coordinator, is being taken up by [Raisedon Zenenga](#) of Zimbabwe.)



Each month, PassBlue [profiles](#) UN ambassadors as they assume the Council presidency. To hear more details on Tunisia's goals in January, with insights from Youssef Cherif, download the latest episode of UN-Scripted on [SoundCloud](#), [Google Podcasts](#), [Patreon](#), [iHeart Radio](#) or [Amazon Prime Music](#). (Excerpts of the podcast are below.) The ambassador also spoke to the media on Jan. 4; see above video.

Permanent Representative: Tarek Ladeb, 52

Ambassador since: September 2020

Languages: Arabic, French, English, Russian

Education: Master's degree in translation. Practical formation cycle in international law and diplomacy, l'Ecole Nationale d'Administration de Tunis, 1991-1992.

His story, briefly: Tarek Ladeb was born in Gafsa, a city of about 105,000 in southwest Tunisia known for its agriculture and mining industries. He studied Arabic translation, and while his education did not initially point to a diplomatic career, his language skills ended up being quite handy: he speaks all but one of the languages (Chinese) of the Council's permanent members.

"I dreamed of being a translator," Ladeb said. "I couldn't continue in languages, so I passed the national exam in Tunisia and then entered this very fascinating world of diplomacy. It's very interesting to represent your country, to defend the principles and the interests of your country, and travel all over the world, discover new cultures, new civilizations, and deal with all the issues that interest the world in general."

Since the beginning of his diplomatic career, his work has mostly focused on the Arab world. Beginning in 1994, he held posts in Oman, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Jordan. Before being posted to New York City, he worked as director of the Arab and Islamic Organizations in Tunisia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "A big part of the issues on the agenda . . . is dealing with situations in our region," he said, "so I think that it facilitates my work on these issues in the Council, and it facilitates also the contact with the Arab representations here because we are the Arab member on the Council."

Ladeb is Tunisia's third ambassador in its first year of its two-year elected term. His predecessors left for nebulous reasons. In February, then-Ambassador Moncef Baati was summoned home amid reports that Tunisia (and Indonesia) were circulating a pro-Palestine draft resolution in the Security Council and calling US President Trump's Middle East peace plan a breach of international law, drawing fire from Washington. (The draft resolution **was withdrawn**.) The next Tunisian ambassador, Kais Kabtani, was installed for only five months before he was suddenly recalled in September. **He has left the government**. Before Kabtani left, Ladeb was deputy permanent representative (DPR), so he succeeded Kabtani. "It was a smooth transition . . . because as a DPR, I was used to almost all the issues on the agenda items of the Council, and the work of the UN in general," he said.

Ambassador Ladeb is married. He talked to PassBlue on Dec. 30. His remarks have been edited and condensed for clarity.

How do you balance the interests of the Arab League and the African Union? Where are they compatible, where are they not compatible? How challenging is it for Tunisia to occupy both of these seats on the Council? We are assuming this responsibility of representing the Arab world and the African continent, and we have been elected on the African continent. But these are the two main pillars of our identity, and we have excellent relations with all the Arab countries and with all the African countries. So, coordination with them is going very well. We don't have any problems in coordinating both. We are coordinating also with the two observer missions of the African Union and the League of Arab States here in New York. We are holding meetings with the African group and the Arab group, and we have the mechanism of the A3+1 [three African elected members and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines] in the Council, which is very efficient, and which is doing a great job in dealing with and in coordinating our positions toward African issues mainly, and also other issues.

What was your reaction to Mladenov's sudden decision to turn down the job of special envoy for Libya, and what are your hopes for Libya? Libya is a top priority for Tunisia. Since it's our neighbor, the two populations have excellent relations and historic, deep-rooted ties. Tunisia never closed its borders with Libya. The positive developments in Libya in relation to the final cease-fire agreement that was signed on the 23rd of October, the political dialogue forum that held its in-person meeting in Tunis and the 5+5 Military Committee meetings [bringing together five senior officers from the Libyan Government of National Accord and five from the Libyan National Army] created an important momentum in Libya, which should be sustained to align the rails, let's say, to achieve the political settlement of the crisis and to end the suffering of the Libyan population of people and restore peace and stability and, of course, to preserve Libya's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

This is important, but it's still fragile progress that should be continued through the engagement of the Libyan parties in the political process. The nomination of the special envoy was a very, very important step. This momentum and the progress made in the political process must be continuing. The Security Council has agreed on [a restructuring] of the UN mission. Mr. Mladenov said that he would not accept the role for personal and family reasons. So for us, it's important to know that this process continues and that the [UN] secretary-general chooses a new envoy to accompany this process. Raisedon Zenenga of Zimbabwe was appointed assistant secretary-

Head of State: President Kais Saied

Foreign Affairs Minister: Othman Jerandi

Type of Government: Semipresidential republic

Year Tunisia Joined the UN: 1956

Years on the Security Council: 1959–1960, 1980–1981 , 2000–2001, 2020-2021

Population: 11.6 million

GDP per capita, 2019: \$3,317. EU, \$33,723; US, \$59,531; world, \$10,721



Stéphanie Fillion

Stéphanie Fillion is a New York-based reporter specializing in foreign affairs and human rights who has been writing for PassBlue regularly for a year, including co-producing UN-Scripted, a new podcast series on global affairs through a UN lens. She has a master’s degree in journalism, politics and global affairs from Columbia University and a B.A. in political science from McGill University. Fillion was awarded a European Union in Canada Young Journalists fellowship in 2015 and was an editorial fellow for La Stampa in 2017. She speaks French, English and Italian.

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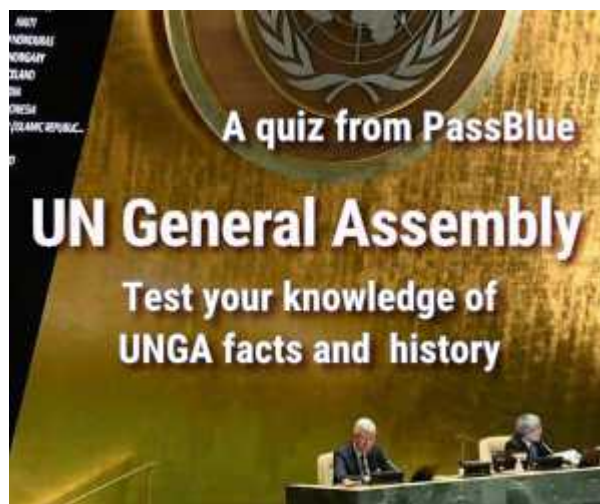
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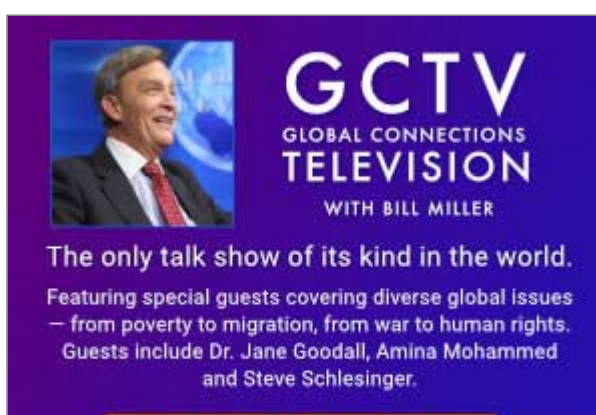
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